



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

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State Dept. review completed



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Information as 1600 EST 6 April 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Communist forces launched a series of heavy attacks during 5-6 April against ARVN and US positions near the provincial capitals of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces.

1. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: A sudden upsurge in Communist offensive activity has been reported against ARVN and US positions near Quang Tri city and Hue, the capitals of South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces (Paras. 1-6). A Viet Cong directive captured recently by US forces in Tay Ninh Province outlines enemy plans for conducting multiregimental operations in 1967 (Paras. 7-8).

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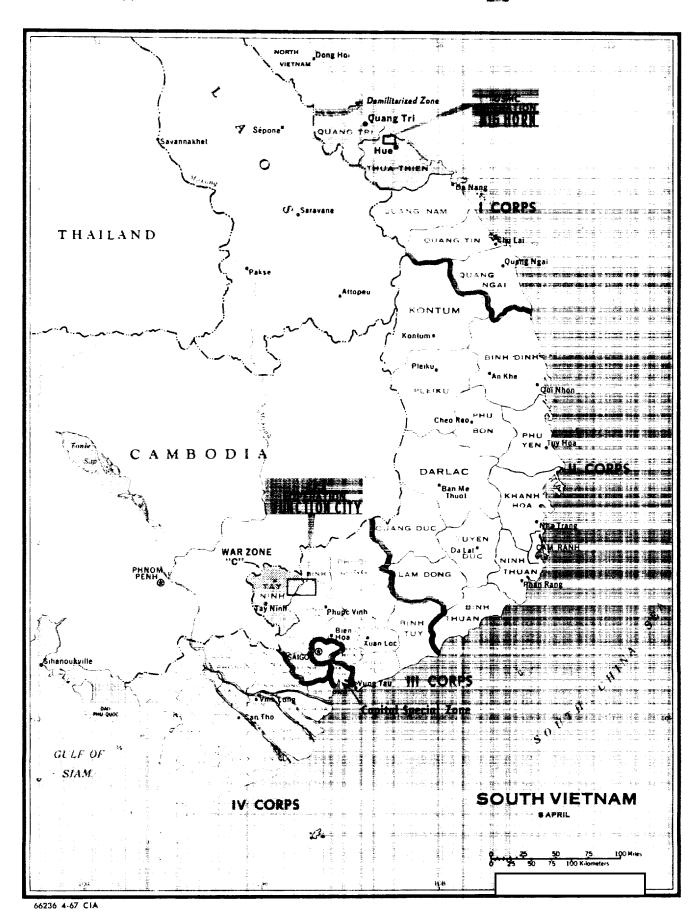
- II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
 Political activity in the normally guiet delta area
- There is Military Developments in North Vietnam: nothing of significance to report.

elections (Paras. 1-7).

is increasing because of the forthcoming national

- IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.
- V. Communist Political Developments: A briefing given to heads of missions in Hanoi by the DRV Foreign Ministry at the time of the release of the Ho-Johnson letters, maintained that the US intended to escalate the war (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Communist forces launched a series of heavy attacks during 5-6 April against ARVN and US positions near the provincial capitals of South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces, Quang Tri and Thua Thien.
- 2. The action began on 5 April when Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces, striking in undetermined numbers, simultaneously attacked an ARVN airfield two miles southeast of Quang Tri city, the nearby troop compounds of an ARVN regiment and artillery battalion, and the field position of an ARVN infantry battalion. Indicative of fairly heavy fighting were cumulative ARVN casualties of 63 killed, 75 wounded, and five missing and enemy losses of 60 killed and 25 weapons captured. In addition, two light US observation aircraft were destroyed.
- 3. In Quang Tri city proper, an enemy force of unknown size entered the provincial jail and released 220 Viet Cong prisoners. At approximately the same time, a nearby US Army artillery battery was attacked, resulting in American losses of 10 killed and 9 wounded compared with enemy losses of 7 killed. In addition, the government's provincial headquarters and adjacent MACV/Office of Civilian Operations compound in the city were attacked by recoilless rifle fire, rockets, and satchel charges. Six US personnel were wounded in these assaults.
- 4. Meanwhile, an ARVN base located seven miles west-northwest of Hue, the capital of Thua Thien Province, was shelled by an estimated 150 rounds of 82-mm. mortar fire and an unknown number of rockets and recoilless rifle rounds. The shelling was followed by two consecutive ground attacks which succeeded in penetrating the compound stacks which succeeded in penetrating the compound attacks which succeeded in penetrating the compound stacks which succeeded in the attacking force-which lost 20 killed-was forced to withdraw.

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- 5. Elements of the two-battalion US Marine Operation BIG HORN also reported heavy contact on 5 April with company-strength or larger Communist units ten miles west-northwest of Hue. Fifteen marines were reported killed and 45 wounded compared with known enemy losses of six killed. In addition, a joint US Marine/US Army artillery unit eight miles northwest of Hue was bombarded on 5 April by approximately 100 rounds of 82-mm. mortar fire, and then attacked by a two-company enemy force. Friendly casualties in this engagement, however, were light.
- 6. The sudden upsurge in enemy offensive activity in the eastern coastal regions of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces may be part of an effort to divert allied attention from the suspected infiltration of sizable numbers of NVA troops from both Laos and the DMZ into the western portions of South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces. The actions, obviously well coordinated, may also reflect Communist plans referred to in captured documents to mount sizable attacks designed to pin down and overextend major US and allied forces as a screen for guerrilla activity to counter the Revolutionary Development program. There is no clear indication whether the stepped-up aggressiveness of the past two days presages a larger Communist offensive involving elements of possibly five North Vietnamese regiments in the Quang Tri DMZ area.

Possible Communist Plans for Large-Scale Operations

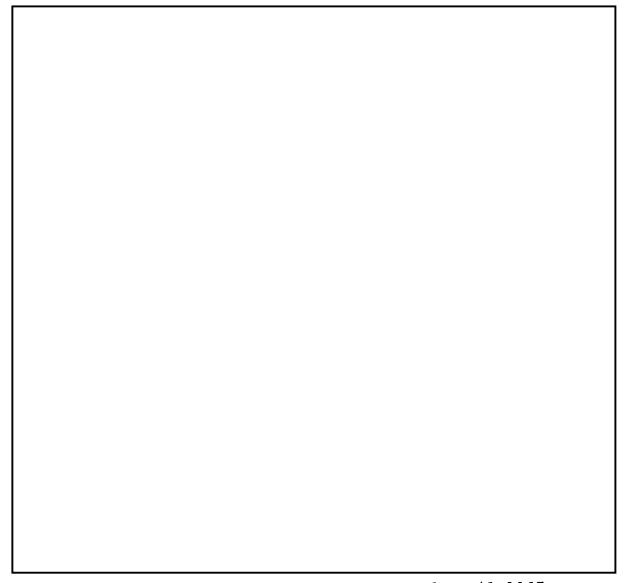
7. US forces conducting Operation JUNCTION CITY in northern Tay Ninh Province recently captured a directive from the "Military Staff Department" of the Viet Cong's Liberation Army to the "artillery command" (presumably subordinate to COSVN) indicating enemy plans for conducting multiregimental-size operations in 1967. The document, dated 15 February 1967, outlines the signal training and tactics necessary to ensure proper field communications for military campaigns involving from two to three regiments.

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8. There is no indication whether the directive was intended exclusively for Communist main force units operating in the War Zone "C" environs of Tay Ninh Province, or represented a country-wide strategy decision. In any event, the contents of the document suggest that the Communists do not intend to abandon the concept of large-scale mobile warfare in favor of their current re-emphasis on guerrilla warfare.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. With presidential and legislative elections now set for this fall, political activity is on the upswing in the populous but normally placid delta area. Recent reports indicate that efforts are being made to organize a new political party, that a power struggle is currently under way among the leaders of the influential Hoa Hao religious sect, and that regional feelings still determine political attitudes south of Saigon.
- 2. Ly Qui Chung, nominal leader of the 12-man Movement for the Renaissance of the South (MRS) bloc in the Constituent Assembly, recently told a journalist that he is attempting to organize a political party with the same name as the bloc to participate in the elections. Chung declared that the party, which will be an open political organization, hopes to attract young, capable Constituent Assembly members and to sponsor between 50 and 70 candidates in the elections for both houses of the legislature. He also indicated that the party would support Tran Van Huong for the presidency.
- 3. MRS members, who are generally considered to be militant southern regionalists, have been among the more adamant critics in the Constituent Assembly of the northern-oriented military government, and their support of fellow southerner Huong is not surprising. Vo Long Trieu, who resigned from Premier Ky's cabinet in protest last fall, is acting as Huong's unofficial campaign manager, and is very close to the MRS bloc in the assembly. Trieu is also working hard-apparently with some success thus far--to secure the support of the influential Southern Old Students Association for Huong at the expense of association president Tran Van Don.

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- 6. According to the US Embassy, Hoa Hao leaders who are influential in seven delta provinces are currently engaged in a power struggle. Hoa Hao central executive committee chairman Luong Trong Tuong, who generally has cooperated with and supported Premier Ky, has temporarily been replaced, thus jeopardizing Ky's influence with the sect. Tuong may regain the chairmanship, but it is uncertain whether he would be able to deliver a Hoa Hao bloc vote for Ky should Ky be the military candidate. Other Hoa Hao leaders recognize the value of the Hoa Hao unity and are not antimilitary, but they remain southerners at heart.
- 7. Political developments in the delta cannot be projected with any degree of certainty over the next several months, although one or two tentative conclusions are possible. One is that military unity might not hold up as firmly in the delta as it might elsewhere in the country. Another possibility, however, is that fellow southerners Phan Khac Suu and Tran Van Huong may hurt each other by splitting the southern regionalist vote.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- 1. When Hanoi disclosed the Ho-Johnson letters on 21 March, the Foreign Ministry summoned the heads of missions in Hanoi and gave them an assessment of the military situation which underscored the regime's determination to continue the war regardless of the cost.
- the diplomats were told that the US was planning to escalate the war over the next several months as a result of decisions made at the Guam conference. The Foreign Ministry spokesman claimed that this escalation would include air raids against airfields, the port of Haiphong, and the dikes during the flood season. The spokesman expressed doubt about the sincerity of American peace proposals and insisted that despite escalation the regime would not be interested in making any reciprocal agreement with the US.
- 3. The North Vietnamese spokesman indicated that the leadership in Hanoi was "confident of victory," which it believed would come about "through political action in Washington" as well as through action on the battlefield in South Vietnam. DRV leaders felt that public opinion in the US would not continue to support heavy casualties and that, following the failure of an intensive escalation, the US would become "frustrated" and seek peace.

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